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WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE FINAL: DELHI FACE MUMBAI CHALLENGE

The finalists from the inaugural season two years ago will face each other again at the Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai for the summit clash

TWO MOST CONSISTENT SIDES MEET AGAIN

Amongst the five WPL teams, Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals have made it to the competition's playoffs on all three occasions. Delhi topped table on all three occasions, while Mumbai, led by Indian captain Harmanpreet Kaur, won the title once. Mumbai beat Guajarat Giants in the eliminator, while Delhi entered the final on points

TOP PLAYERS EXPECTED TO LIGHT UP SHOW

- Mumbai's Natalie Sciver-Brunt and Hayley Matthews have topped the most runs and most wickets charts, respectively
- Delhi's Meg Lanning and Shafali Verma scored the most runs as an opening pair in the history of the competition
- Both teams are nearly even in sixes: MI with 30 and DC 28 | P17

2-0

DELHI WON BOTH FIXTURES AGAINST MUMBAI IN THE LEAGUE STAGE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

TRUMP POSITIVE, AS IS PUTIN

Russian president sends more signals to Don on Ukraine truce

MOSCOW: US President Donald Trump on Friday urged his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to spare the lives of Ukrainian soldiers on the frontline, after what he called was a "very good and productive" ceasefire discussions in Moscow.

Trump's comments came after his special envoy Steve Witkoff held talks with Putin in Moscow to discuss details of a plan for a 30-day ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine after three years of war.

"We had very good and productive discussions with President Vladimir Putin of Russia yesterday, and there is a very good chance that this horrible war can finally come to an end," Trump said on his Truth Social network.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt later clarified that Trump himself had not spoken to Putin on Thursday night. She said no call was scheduled on Friday "but that could obviously change."

Moscow has in the past week been driving much of Ukraine's forces out of Russia's Kursk region, parts of which Kyiv occupied last year. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Friday that the US could help end the war by exerting sufficient pressure on Russia to end its invasion of Ukraine. Strong pressure must be applied to the only one who wants to continue this war," Zelensky said.

Kursk was one of Kyiv's few bargaining chips in swapping land with Russia, which has occupied around a fifth of Ukraine since it took Crimea in 2014 and launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Earlier in the day, Russia said Putin had sent "additional" signals to Trump about a ceasefire, adding it was "cautiously optimistic" about the prospect of a deal.

US envoy Steve Witkoff met Putin late Thursday to lay out the details of the joint US-Ukrainian plan, which envisages a 30-day pause in hostilities between Moscow and Kyiv after three years of fighting.

The Kremlin said both sides agreed that a telephonic "conversation is needed" between Trump and Putin but that the timing was yet to be determined. *AP & AFP*

Vladimir Putin

Donald Trump

Putin thanks leaders, including PM Modi

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin thanked world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi for their "noble mission" to end the war between Ukraine and Russia. "Many heads of state, the president of China, the Prime Minister of India ... are spending a lot of time dealing with this issue. We are thankful to all of them," Putin said

ON A WING AND A PRAYER

Passengers standing on the wing of an American Airlines plane as they are evacuated after it caught fire while at a gate at Denver International Airport in Colorado, US, early Friday. While taxiing to the gate, an engine on the Boeing 737-800 caught fire. Flight 1006, headed from Colorado Springs Airport to Dallas Fort Worth, had 172 passengers and six crew members at the time of the mishap | AFP | P12

No new varsities will be shut: Siddu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

A week after the announcement of Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar that some new universities will be merged with old ones, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said no new universities will be shut down in the state.

Raising the issue in the Assembly, Dr CN Ashwathnarayan (BJP) alleged that the Congress government is attempting to shut down the universities started during his party's rule. Siddaramaiah said only matters of urgency should be raised during adjournment motion. There was no need to debate this issue now.

When BJP members sought a debate on it, the CM said the government has not taken any decision yet. The cabinet subcommittee under the chairmanship of Shivakumar is yet to submit a report in this regard. Even the cabinet has not discussed the issue. With this being the situation, it is not right to say that the government is attempting to close the new universities, he added.

LoP R Ashoka said Shivakumar had stated that the government wanted to merge some new universities with old or parent varsities. "But the Chief Ministerr is giving a different version," he added.

Trio 'molests' Israeli woman, Hampi cops let them go

KIRAN BALANNANAVAR @ Hampi

AN alleged molestation incident involving an Israeli tourist in Hampi has come to light. A man, who was a witness to the incident, said the woman was allegedly molested by a group of three youths during Hampi Utsav last week. Seeing the youths allegedly molesting the woman, an autorickshaw driver rushed to her rescue. But the youths assaulted the auto driver and left him with a bloody nose. Hampi police, who took the youths into custody, filed a case under Section 109 for assaulting the auto driver. They did not file any case against the youths for allegedly molesting the Israeli woman, although she was also taken to the station along with the auto driver.

The police produced the youths before a local court. The court let them go after they admitted to assaulting the auto driver and gave a written undertaking that they would not commit such offences henceforth, he said. He said the Israeli woman told the auto driver that she would take up the matter with her embassy and seek legal action against the three youths. Hampi police, however, have not received any complaint from any embassy so far. Meanwhile, police sources said the youths, who hail from Hosapete, were taken to the station along with the auto driver and the victim. A case under Section 109 of IPC was registered against them.

A police officer of Vijayanagara, who confirmed the incident, said patrolling has been intensified and action will be taken against troublemakers.

300% premium on gold bond redemption at ₹8,624/gm

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

INVESTORS who bought sovereign gold bonds series IV in 2017 have struck gold.

With gold prices crossing the sensitive $3000/ounce first time-ever in early trade on Friday in international markets, the Reserve Bank of India fixed the final redemption price for sovereign gold bonds (SGBs) due on March 17, at ₹8,624/gm for the 2016-17 series IV. SGB Series IV was issued at a price of ₹2,943/gm.

"The redemption price of the SGB shall be based on the simple average of closing price of gold of 999 purity of the week (Monday-Friday), preceding the date of redemption, as published by the India Bullion and Jewellers Association," the RBI said in a statement.

Since the inception of the SGB scheme in November 2015, under the gold monetisation scheme to offer an alternative investment to physical gold, as much as 146.96 tonnes of gold was issued/raised through 67 tranches, amounting to ₹72,274 crore. Since July 2024, the RBI has announced premature redemption for SGBs issued between 2017 and 2020.

SGB 2016-17 ISSUE AND REDEMPTION PRICE

Series	Issue price	Redemption price
I	₹3,119/gm	₹6,938/gram
II	₹3,150/gm	₹7,517/gm
III	₹3,007/gm	₹7,788/gm
IV	₹2,943/gm	₹8,624/gm

In FY24, investors bought gold bonds worth ₹27,031 crore or 44.34 tonnne of gold.

Since July 2024, the government has redeemed six tranches of SGBs, with 61 tranches remaining outstanding, and the final redemption scheduled for February 2032.

SGB 2016-17 series I, issued at ₹3,119 on August 5, 2016, was redeemed in the first week of August 2024 at ₹6,938/gram.

EXPRESS READ

Pocso case: BSY gets HC relief, exempted from personal appearance

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court on Friday stayed the order passed by a special court to take cognisance of the offences against BJP leader and former chief minister BS Yediyurappa, concerning a case registered against him under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, and the IPC, on charges of sexual assault on a 17-year old girl at his Bengaluru residence | P4

Cabinet nod for Bill to ensure 4% quota for Muslims in govt tenders

Bengaluru: The Karnataka cabinet has decided to table a Bill to provide 4% reservation under 2B category for Muslims while awarding contracts to implement development projects worth up to ₹1 lakh by amending The Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act, 1999. The cabinet also approved a proposal to streamline KPSC agency by reducing the number of members to 8 from 10 | P4

Man with iron rod attacks devotees at Golden Temple

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

A man armed with a rod attacked devotees inside the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar on Friday, injuring five.

Sources said the attack took place inside Guru Ram Dass Inn near the community kitchen (langar) hall.

The Punjab Police have arrested the accused and another person who had accompanied him to the Golden Temple.

The police have not officially disclosed the identity of the attacker. But an official said the attacker was identified as Zulfan from Haryana, who is working as a daily wage labourer. He allegedly had an argument with some people before he started hitting devotees with an iron rod. A probe is on to unearth the motive behind the attack, police said.

One of the injured, a youth from Bathinda, is in serious condition and has been admitted at the emergency wing of Sri Guru Ram Das Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Amritsar.

Meanwhile, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has strongly condemned the incident.

An injured receives treatment at a hospital after a man attacked devotees at the Golden Temple complex | PTI

Schoolgirls, who fell ill after they were sprayed with spurious colour, being taken to a hospital in Gadag on Friday | EXPRESS

4 girls hospitalised after group sprays spurious colour

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @ Gadag

FOUR schoolgirls fell ill after a group of youths sprayed colours containing some chemical on them at Suvarnagiri Tanda near Lakshmeshwara in Gadag district on Friday, the first day of Holi festival.

They are being treated in hospitals at Lakshmeshwara and Gadag. Police detained two boys in this connection. According to sources, the group, including some schoolboys, who also hail from Suvarnagiri Tanda, sprayed spurious colours on 10 girls who were going to Uma Vidyalaya High School at Lakshmeshwara by bus.

Although the girls, studying in Class 8 and 9, pleaded that they have to write their exams, the youths did not listen and started spraying colours on them. The youths also threw water mixed with egg, manure and some juice at the girls.

Unable to bear the stench, the girls started vomiting. Immediately, the driver stopped another bus and took the girls to Lakshmeshwara. As they reached Lakshmeshwara, the condition of four girls deteriorated and they developed breathing problems. Their teachers rushed them to the nearby government hospital immediately.

Gauri Pujara and Divya Lamani were shifted to Gadag District Hospital. Ankita Lamani and Tanusha Lamani are being treated in the government hospital. The incident led to a clash at Suvarnagiri Thanda. Police team rushed to Thanda and detained the two boys.

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